

II

THE MEDIAEVAL ATTITUDE TOWARD HISTORY

I SHALL take my text from a pagan author of classical antiquity:

For as a living creature is rendered wholly useless if deprived of its eyes, so if you take truth from History, what is left is but an idle unprofitable tale. Therefore, one must not shrink from blaming one's friends or praising one's enemies; nor be afraid of finding fault with and commending the same persons at different times. For it is impossible that men engaged in public affairs should always be right, and unlikely that they should always be wrong. Holding ourselves, therefore, entirely aloof from the actors, we must as historians make statements and pronounce judgment in accordance with the actions themselves.¹

These words might well have served as the creed of the very father of historical method. And, while it is not Thucydides who speaks here, yet we are listening to a Greek and a great historian who viewed his materials objectively in a scientific spirit. Thucydides was a Greek who wrote about Greeks; Polybius was a Greek who wrote about Romans. Both men were at home in the world to appreciate the human spectacle, to analyze the motions of the great social animal which is man, to investigate facts and to seek the truth, and to render judgments, based on human actions, with a balanced perspective. Here were historians who studied man and judged him in the light of the world; theirs was a method of critical inquiry which builds upward from actions to intentions; they judged men's purposes in the

¹Polybius (trans., Schuckburgh), i, 14.

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light of their acts and induced what they were from what they did. Hence establishing facts and verifying data is the beginning of a critical process which leads ultimately to reasoned verdicts regarding man and society. And the modern scientific historian will not take issue with their statement of method and of purpose.

I shall not enter into the controversy here as to whether history is really a science or whether history is primarily a branch of literature whose materials have been criticized and tested by scientific methods of analysis. Nor can I say whether the old scientific history and the new philosophic history stand in the same relation as alchemy and chemistry or astrology and astronomy. An outstanding advocate of this new school of history, Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, has said that to many historians a volume on the new social studies has "no more value or relevance than a theoretical treatise on contemporary astrophysics or astro-chemistry would have for an esoteric modern astrologer."¹ And I make only a passing observation as to whether general historical principles may be induced from particular data. Professor E. P. Cheyney of the University of Pennsylvania, in an instructive address before the American Historical Association at Columbus in 1923, entitled "Law in History," took some tentative steps toward formulating such principles, but I am not clear regarding their concrete application.² Nor is Professor Cheyney quite clear; nor do I think Thucydides would have been clear about the matter either. Possibly Polybius would have tried to apply them; at any rate, he perceived certain large general features in the Roman political system of checks and balances which con-

¹H. E. Barnes, *The New History and the Social Studies* (New York: Century, 1925), Preface, p. x.

²*The American Historical Review*, XXIX (1924), 231-248.

vinced him of the immense soundness of Roman political institutions. But, when the revolutionary movement began to get under way in the latter part of the second century, he perceived doubtless that he had spoken too soon. The system which survived the Punic wars into Cato's day could not bear the burden of factionalism from the time of the Gracchi and Marius and Sulla onward.

In any case, social science employs an inductive method leading from particular data to particular conclusions but apparently must fall short of establishing general principles that can be applied uniformly in specific instances after the fashion of the exact sciences in the realm of natural philosophy. Nor am I qualified for that matter to say whether even the physicist succeeds in this. Aristotle thought he had succeeded when he set the earth, immoveable at the center of his universe. In the *De Caelo*, he says, "Physics teaches us the cause of the immobility of the earth." "As all heavy bodies tend to seek the center of the universe, the various parts of the earth have arranged themselves around the center in such a manner that an equilibrium is established, and this equilibrium produces immobility."¹ Probably Aristotle should have stuck to his biology, and Thucydides surely did well to cling to his facts. But men are now rising here and there to whisper that perhaps Herodotus did better than either. I have in mind, as example, Dr. T. R. Glover who spoke here at the Rice Institute in the autumn of 1925 and who tells us that Herodotus is defective in matters of strategy, tactics and battles, that he worried "very little about exact chronology, about which Thucydides troubled a very great deal," that he rambles and digresses and seems to waste time, but that he does show us the world and the

¹J. K. Wright, *Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1925), p. 371, n. 4.

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manner of men in it, "what were their ways of life, their preconceptions, and outlooks—everything, in short, that most matters in story or history."¹ In other words, Herodotus was an artist, if not a scientist, and for him "History is more than historical material—it is life." Furthermore, Herodotus was a Greek who wrote about Egyptians and Persians and all sorts of strange barbarian peoples.

Approximately six hundred and fifty years after Polybius had died, another historian was born in Gaul who had a very different attitude toward history and who discussed much in history that would have surprised Polybius. Gregory of Tours (538-93) provides our chief narrative source for the early Merovingian period, and his *History of the Franks*, though the greatest of the tribal or national histories which record the deeds of the barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire, is a morbid and discouraging tale, indeed. His pages portray a dark and gloomy picture of Gallo-Roman society in a period of transition, disintegrating under the impact of the Frankish attack. In 486 at Soissons, Clovis had eliminated the last shadowy vestige of Roman control from northern Gaul and extended his power to the Loire river. Ten years later at Strasburg, he overcame the Alamanni and accepted Christianity in its Roman Catholic form in accordance with a vow made to his Burgundian wife before the battle. At least, tradition holds that Clovis had promised to be baptized together with his followers if the victory were theirs. Also through a clever combination of cunning deceit and crafty murder he became chieftain over his kinsmen, the Ripuarian Franks, and, thus, united the entire Frankish nation under his leadership, for, as Gregory observes with ironical piety in unconscious com-

¹T. R. Glover, *From Pericles to Philip* (3rd ed., London: Methuen, 1919), pp. 35-36.

mentary upon the age, "daily the Lord laid his enemies low under his hand, and increased his kingdom, because he walked before Him with an upright heart, and did that which was pleasing in His sight."¹ Finally in 507 at Vouillé, the powerful Visigoths, who were unitarian Arians rather than trinitarian Catholics, were driven from Aquitaine, leaving to Clovis and his successors the task of reorganizing and administering the larger part of Gaul.

It was a time when the light of learning grew dim in western Europe, for with Gregory we stray well within the dismal swamp of the "Dark Ages." And the flashes and flickerings of his pen are not reflected gleams from the cold and steady lamp-light of classical wisdom, but too often mere will-o'-the-wisps. It seems weird and almost unaccountable that in a mere century or so we have left Ausonius and Prudentius, Salvian and Apollinaris Sidonius far behind. In Gregory's day, we find it hard to believe that Gaul could once have cherished the poet who turned his own Moselle into romantic verse and looked across a peaceful landscape, placidly and serenely, "the last of the untroubled age." As one breathes the sweet melancholy from the Fields of the Sorrowful Lovers, one wonders if Ausonius is not already the prophet of the death of literature and art in the land that loved them so well. I realize that I am twisting his meaning and taking liberties in retrospect, yet I cannot forego quoting Miss Waddell's beautiful lines:

They wander in deep woods, in mournful light,
Amid long reeds and drowsy-headed poppies,
And lakes where no wave laps, and voiceless streams,
Along whose banks in the dim light grow old
Flowers that were once bewailed names of kings.²

¹Gregory of Tours (trans., Dalton), ii, 29 (40).

²Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), p. 6.

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Here are the autumn glory, the strange silences, the perfect beauty and the artistry wherein one may find whatever his fancy seeks, without fear of disappointment. The meaning of Ausonius is immaterial: the sixth century is a deep woods; culture has become drowsy and slumbers; the light of learning is wan and mournful and a dim light grown old; no wave laps on the lake of Latin prose where once the rolling sentences of Livy and Tacitus crashed and battered, and the measured periods of Cicero followed one another precisely and orderly to the shore; the streams of Latin poetry are nearly voiceless; and the Roman emperors are bewailèd names, for there was neither justice nor mercy under the despotism of the Frankish kings. Yet it is easy to be careless and sweeping in judging this wicked, unruly, turbulent age. Latin letters never disappear completely during the "Dark Ages"; it was not dark everywhere; the lights are merely fewer and more widely scattered. Gregory of Tours died in 593; Gregory the Great in 604; Fortunatus in 609; and Isidore of Seville in 636. With their passing, the spirit of Latin literature has become a pale and fragile ghost; "it was low tide on the Continent of Europe."¹ These impressions may perhaps suffice to indicate the unhappy nature of the age in which Gregory undertook his *History*. It was not conducive to quiet deliberation and detachment in writing. The instability of government was a marked feature of the time, a condition which produced ultimately the feeble line of kings (*rois fainéants*) who in the words of Gibbon "ascended the throne without power, and sunk into the grave without a name." Under these circumstances, the Merovingian period could only be an age of deep literary decline, not constructive intellectually though active in superstition and credulity. Even so from this era of stag-

¹*Ibid.*, p. 28.

nation the Latin tradition did survive, and the Roman inheritance persisted.

Let us return to the famous dictum of Polybius: "We must as historians make statements and pronounce judgment in accordance with the actions themselves," and thence proceed to examine several questions of fundamental importance. Do mediaeval historians subscribe to this basic dogma of historical science? Is this the keynote and master-motive of their historical writing? Or are there invisible and perhaps inscrutable causes that underlie human actions, causes that are ultimate realities of which historical facts are only symbols? Polybius had wished to establish historical truths objectively with accuracy and exactness: "If you take truth from history, what is left is but an idle unprofitable tale." But are there more significant truths which are reflected in human actions and turn them into pale and transient shadows? Shall we consider events as facts or as symbols? Let us now take Gregory of Tours as a mediaeval type, and compare his views with those of Polybius who may be considered representative of the antique classical attitude toward history. We may gain a clue to the way in which Gregory interprets his facts if we turn to the Prologue of the First Book of his *History* where he says:

I am fain first to make profession of my own belief, that whoso reads may doubt not that I hold the catholic faith. . . . I have but this one thing at heart, to hold fast in singleness and conviction of heart all that of which the Church enjoins belief, knowing that one subject to sin may yet obtain mercy of our gracious Lord through simple faith alone.¹

Thence he proceeds to examine his views concerning the Trinity which are stated briefly in the Prologue of the Third Book:

¹Gregory of Tours (trans., Dalton), i. Prologue.

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But as for us, we confess the Lord one and invisible, infinite, incomprehensible, glorious, everlasting, and eternal, one in Trinity by reason of the three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; we confess him three in one, through equality of substance, of godhead, of omnipotence and power, who is one God, almighty and supreme, reigning world without end.¹

And in the sentences immediately preceding this statement, we secure somewhat deeper insight to the way in which Gregory apprehends historical data: "I would fain, if it be permitted, compare awhile the successes of the Christians who confess the blessed Trinity with the disasters befalling those who sought to rive it asunder." Accordingly he denounces the heretic Arius, "wicked founder of this wicked (unitarian) sect," and exalts St. Hilary, "blessed defender of the undivided Trinity, and for its sake driven into exile" who was later "restored to his own country and entered Paradise." Passing from ecclesiastical to secular figures, we read:

Clovis, who confessed it (the Trinity), by its aid overcame these heretics, and extended his kingdom over all Gaul; Alaric, denying it, was punished by the loss of his kingdom and people, and, what is more, of eternal life. For though the wiles of the enemy rob true believers of many things, yet the Lord restoreth them a hundredfold; but the heretics make no gain, while that which they possessed is taken from them.

In other words, on Gregory's pages we see the hand of God writing purposefully and inexorably through the actions of men: we have arrived at the providential conception and interpretation of history. Events become the shadows of ideas in the mind of an omniscient and omnipotent God; acts are the resultant of an ulterior and antecedent will.

¹ *Ibid.*, iii, Prologue. The following passages are condensed from this Prologue likewise.

What are the circumstances that have caused history, thus, to dissolve into a dream? We must turn back to the distant day of Thucydides when the city-states of the ancient Greek world began to go down amid the thunder and storm of the Peloponnesian wars and thence plunged into the annihilating vortex of the Macedonian hegemony. The conquests of Alexander and the creation of his Asiatic empire on a Persian basis meant the destruction of city-states as independent political units and the importation of oriental ideas of god-kingship into the previously free and liberal conceptions of Greek political theory. In this connection, Professor Ferguson of Harvard has made the pointed suggestion that the deification of rulers performed this signal service: "that it made possible the lasting union of all the city-states of the world in a single great territorial state."¹ The logical fulfillment of this tendency was the creation of the Roman Empire which arose phoenix-like from the ashes of Hellenistic monarchy with the sanction of divine rulers unimpaired. Another result was an enormous spiritual depression providing the field in which Christianity was sowed. There is loss of confidence in self and decline of freedom in artistic, literary, and scientific expression. Loss of faith in the power of reason leads to a certain sterility of thought which becomes imitative rather than creative. The abdication of the scientific movement of the First Alexandrian school is paralleled and followed by the political decay, social dislocation and material destruction of the civil wars which mark the end of the Roman Republic. With the restoration of peace by Augustus and the dawn of the "Golden Age," humanity does not regain its lost faith. The new era of the Empire is formal and artificial and a trifle stilted

¹W. S. Ferguson, *Greek Imperialism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), pp. 147-148.

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in contrast with the vivid exuberance and nonchalance and naturalness of Periclean Athens; antiquity had lost her youth and was growing old. Professor Rostovtzeff of Yale puts the matter well in his masterly introductory lecture on "Mystic Italy":

Some revelled in the lowest materialism and lived on the principle "Enjoy the present, never mind the future"; others, the best, the most intelligent, who saw the human brute triumphant and human reason helpless, lost almost all confidence in the human intellect, and appealed to higher and more mysterious forces.¹

And so the human mind begins to turn inward upon itself and displays a subjective introspective attitude. This leads to the adoption of the religious, mystical or magical point of view. Gods come to earth and die, and by a magical resurrection obtain human salvation. Myriad cults invade the western world with their occult rites and strange practices, bringing the allure and mystery of the East, and the names of Isis and Serapis, Cybele and Attis, Astarte and Adonis, and later Mithra, god of the unconquered sun (*sol invictus*) pass current at Rome and in the provinces. The deepest longings of men's souls can be satisfied only by the complete sacrifice of reason. Neoplatonism which Gibbon has derided as "the second childhood of human reason" is dawning on the spiritual horizon, and the intellectual atmosphere is growing dim and murky. Shortly from this mist the mind of Tertullian will be evolved:

The Son of God was crucified; that is not shameful, because it is shameful. And the Son of God died; that is credible, because it is absurd. And he rose from the dead; that is quite certain, because it is impossible.²

¹M. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy* (New York: Holt, 1927), p. 13.

²See Egon Friedell, *A Cultural History of the Modern Age* (New York: Knopf, 1930), I, 78, from which I am quoting this translation, for a suggestive interpretation of "The Mediaeval Soul."

However, these evidences of intellectual decay possess a profound spiritual significance. Through an atmosphere of pessimism, defeat and servitude, men were blindly groping toward a vision of another world, perfect and complete that would compensate for the miseries of existence. But all this broke utterly with Greek tradition. Self-control, balance, proportion, sanity, all were lost in a confusion of mystical religious ecstasy. Men were no longer at home in the world to use it and to play in it, but were strangers, miserable wayfarers, seeking their own true fatherland in the skies. Their minds were turned to constructions of their future life, and, as Haskins says in the words of Santayana, large disillusion as to this world gave way to minute illusions as to the world to come.¹ This was the morning of mediaeval "otherworldliness." A new dispensation was come, and a new world was born. History had meant an interesting account of human society, its customs, and its institutions, to Herodotus back in those days when the figure of Themistocles moved "weird and gigantic through the golden mist"²; to Thucydides it had meant a reasoned statement of facts and a reasonably accurate narrative of events, in the main considered objectively. But now something has happened to history. It is no longer *historia*, research, inquiry, critical investigation; it has become God's purpose revealed in man.

At this point, let us turn to St. Augustine and his *City of God* which is in many respects the most important work of patristic literature. This monumental treatise contains among other things a comprehensive philosophy of history that sets the tone and provides the approach for historical thinking throughout the subsequent Middle Ages. The

¹C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 242.

²W. S. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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antique habit of thought is hardly discernible in this mystical, transcendental, otherworldly composition. Indeed, so far-reaching in its significance and so portentous of the future direction of mediaeval thought is *The City of God* that one readily pardons the modern undergraduate, tranquilly ignorant of Latin, who attempted to date events *De Civitate Dei* under the mistaken presumption that he was following the chronological convention of classical Rome which dated A. U. C. (*ab urbe condita*). If one must have a fixed date for the beginning of the Middle Ages, the appearance of this great work constitutes a much more suitable base of reckoning than the legendary date for the founding of the city (*ca.* 753 B. C.) does as a point of departure in Roman history. The circumstances which occasioned this piece of apologetic writing are well-known. The sack of Rome by Alaric and his Visigoths marked the mightiest impact of barbarian invasion sustained by the empire up to that point; it shocked the men of that day much as we were shocked by the outbreak of the World War in 1914, and was viewed as a catastrophe of cosmic dimensions. Rome had been the center of the universe, the seat of empire, the lion of cities, the capital of the world, and the citadel of the earth. Men had come to think of Rome as the Eternal City, exempt from invasion and destruction, and the events of 410 shook that feeling of eternity. The foundations upon which men had based their thought were shattered beneath them. The consequent disillusionment and unsettling of mind may be compared with the bewilderment that descended upon thoughtful Christians in 1914 with the fading of the assumption that there would be no more great wars involving the major powers of the civilized world. The supernatural defenders of the city had failed it at last. And the pagans were explaining the sack as a result of turning from the ancient gods

of their fathers to Christianity and were saying that the restoration of the pagan religion would reestablish the eternal character of Rome. The old gods were offended and had withdrawn their protection. The Christian apologists found it hard to answer this argument since good Christians had suffered at Rome as well as the bad pagans, and could not explain why the Christians had not been spared. In this dilemma Augustine attempted to solve the problem and repair the shaken Christian faith. In doing this, he was forced to readjust the entire perspective of history to the Christian outlook on the world.

The City of God in twenty-two books was, then, a new philosophy of history; Professor Rand calls it "a kind of apotheosis of the entire course of apologetics."¹ The first ten books reveal the absurdities of the old Roman worship, refuting them from the Christian point of view, while the last twelve books trace the origin, history, and destinies of the two cities, earthly and heavenly (*civitas terrena* and *civitas coelestis*). The earthly city is material, could not be eternal, and hence must pass away, but the heavenly city is spiritual and eternal. These cities have co-existed from the beginning, corresponding to the two sorts of men: those who live according to men and are dwellers of this earthly city, and those who live according to God and dwell in the heavenly city. The earthly city of Rome contained so many unjust wicked men that it could not be of God; hence it was liable to destruction. Furthermore, these cities are symbolic of the good and the bad who will be separated finally at the Last Judgment. Thus, *The City of God* affords us an example of the new type of Christian historiography which deals not merely with the past and present but with the future as well.

¹E. K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), p. 264.

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It spans the entire course of sacred history from the Creation and the Fall of Man to the Last Judgment and Eternity beyond, whereas for this modern age history in the future tense is impossible, in the present improbable, in the past possible, in the perfect and plu-perfect both probable and usual. For practical writing purposes, history is periodized in six ages corresponding with the six days of the week upon which God labored, "for in the sight of the Creator a thousand years are 'as one day'."¹ After the present period which is the sixth day,

God shall rest as on the seventh day, when He shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. But there is not now space to treat of these ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord's day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?²

Thus, we have come to a new notion in history differing vastly from the antique conceptions of Polybius or Thucydides or Tacitus. Like everything mediaeval, it is an ideal set in the heavens, not on earth, not in this life but in another, not in the past but in the eternal future. It turned men from the earthly Eternal City of Rome to the eternal heavenly city of the life to come. The massed legions treading roads of solid rock in the pages of Tacitus have begun their thin and ghostly march across the skies toward the City of God, unfolding into the mighty expanse of angelic choirs and celestial hosts that fill the Paradise of Dante. These seeming vagaries of mediaeval thought can be understood

¹ C. H. Haskins, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

² St. Augustine, *The City of God* (trans., Dodds), xxii, 30.

basically in terms of Plato's Theory of Ideas in which reality consists of certain transcendental mental concepts that are supra-rational, immaterial, and metaphysical, intelligible only as by a flash of revelation, and hence not susceptible of analysis by physical science. The application of this theory led men to build a spiritual empire out of the stuff of their minds which they considered real as contrasted with the physical world of external actuality wherein they lived in the flesh. Once men believed that these things were true, they began to despise their senses, this material world and everything in it. It is worth-while to note in passing that, as President Lovett remarked in his Matriculation Address in the autumn of 1927, there is probably a direct Platonist influence operating in the teachings of St. Paul, since "it is virtually of his doctrine of ideas—the good, the beautiful, and the true for example—that St. Paul was speaking when he wrote 'the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal'."

And we may note further that Plato influenced St. Augustine through St. Paul and the *New Testament*, and more indirectly through the exotic gospel of the Neoplatonist philosophy. Now in accordance with these ways of thinking, Augustine's City of God is the heavenly city which has no material existence in the outside world of the senses. It is not a physical place but a mental condition or conception, metaphysical and immaterial. This is contrasted with the actual city of Rome here on this earth which men can see and live in with their physical bodies. Mediaeval men assumed that ideas alone were real; so the earthly city of Rome became a mere passing shadow of reality. Material things are only the earthly reflections of ultimate realities. This frame of mind explains why men called life but a pilgrimage on this earth: it was a journey through earth to heaven, through

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the transient to the permanent, through the finite to the infinite, through the material actuality to the ideal reality. As St. Thomas points by sheer intellect and Dante depicts with artistic power, the true end of man is his approach to the God-head and his progress toward Paradise. Again the men of the Middle Ages regarded "The City of God" as the "new Jerusalem," the embodiment of the triumphant church in eternity. The visible Church was its earthly counterpart, but the congregation of men considered themselves truly citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven whose laws were the laws of righteousness established by the Scriptures. The divine will ordered the affairs of this city in the life to come, and partially in its present manifestation in the Church, but forces of evil were also at work, keeping men from full attainment in their "heavenly citizenship." The City of God was at once a present reality and a future attainment, "for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

In the categories of Platonist Realism, history became essentially a *universal* which had existed from all time through all time in the mind of an omniscient and perfect God and which was antecedent to and independent of specific historical events. And the interpretation of history, following the method of Aristotle's syllogistic logic, was a process of deducing the meaning of particular events from this universal or ideal concept of history which was in itself a vast axiom or hypothesis. The culmination of these tendencies, of course, does not occur until we reach the great age of scholasticism in the thirteenth century after the introduction of the complete *Organon* of Aristotle, but the origins of this view of life and of history, as we have seen, may be traced back to the intellectual breakdown, accompanied by man's loss of faith in science, that followed the collapse of

the First Alexandrian school. It is not my purpose to argue whether there is any essential difference between induction and deduction as thought processes, using these terms in the simple old-fashioned sense, or whether all thinking is just thinking. For purposes of convenience, we differentiate the process of building up from particulars to rules of general application from the process of assuming large general axioms and proceeding thence to a narrower particular conclusion; yet it is hard for some of us moderns to see how any general principles can exist independent of pre-existing particulars since we exclude revelation to which the mediaeval mind resorted in this connection. The inductive process has been used apparently to best advantage in the physical sciences, whereas the deductive process has characterized metaphysics and theology. And if I understand rightly, the immense alarm of the current school of "disintegrating critics," of whom Mr. Mencken has been the prophet, arises from the circumstance that such eminent physicists as Millikan, Eddington and Jeans have abandoned a mechanical explanation of the universe, built up by inductive processes, in favor of transcendental and mystical irrationalities or supra-rationalities, accordingly as one views the matter.¹ The heavens which had been peopled by the fairy forms of theologians and metaphysicians are now filled with the more dire shapes of physicists and mathematicians. I pass over such speculations as those of that fine mediaevalist, Ferdinand Lot, who intimates that the mathematician and metaphysician are singing together in the same abstract chorus.² At any rate current ideas that our sensations con-

¹ See *The American Mercury*, XXII (1931), 252-54, for review of Sir James Jeans' *The Mysterious Universe*, by H. L. Mencken.

² Cf. Ferdinand Lot, *La Fin du Monde Antique et le Début du Moyen Age* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1927), pp. 190-91; translated as *The End of the Ancient World* (New York: Knopf, 1931), p. 167.

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sist in the transmission of symbols which mind interprets into reality throw us back upon the Platonist realism of the Middle Ages to the extent of removing ultimate reality from the material world of things; and besides the new symbolic universe in which reality is divorced from concreteness stands at odds with older materialist and nominalist tendencies.¹

I mention this entire question only because it has a certain significance for scientific historians. If they, too, should strive to span the misty gulf between these two empires of thought, whither can they flee save to St. Augustine and *The City of God*? Symbols in things are but one degree removed from symbols in events, and mind operating in matter is only a little way from purpose controlling events. When objectivity depends upon an Eternal and Universal Mind, we find Providence standing on the door-step of History. Thus, just as Aristotle found it hard to reconcile himself to the Plato within him, or just as a post-Darwinian scientist might have been annoyed to discern and explain his conscience, so the scientific historian today becomes much upset at the discovery that facts may be less than they seem, that they may be more than they seem, or that sometimes they may not be facts at all. The present implications of this paradox, if any, it is fruitless to pursue farther, though I would utter the caution that persons, accepting the inductive method for practical working purposes while retaining a deductive philosophy, may find themselves in an untenable intellectual position with consequent contradiction, frustration, and confusion in their historical outlook. It is, to say the least, awkward to adopt a method in history that is inconsistent with one's deep-seated convictions and general

¹ See A. S. Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), especially pp. 27-38.

perspective of life. Here as elsewhere it will be hard to fit round pegs to square holes.

A moment's reflection will suffice to suggest the type of problems which may arise out of a deductive habit of mind. For instance, Augustine's hexameral theory of the "Six Ages of the World," retained in many chronicles and other important compilations of the time, had a deep influence upon mediaeval chronological sense and lasted even into the seventeenth century, while suggestions of it may still be encountered in some extreme fundamentalist and apocalyptic interpretations of history. The feeling of impending disaster to this world and the imminence of the Last Judgment were ever present in human thought. Men believed that history had nearly run its course on earth and sensed no incongruity in this mechanical periodizing of the past, for the present age (usually the sixth) was not intended to be disproportionately long. The revolution wrought in chronology by modern geological science which deals with time in aeons and eternities stands in sharp contrast with the restricted and limited time-sense of the Middle Ages. Besides a mysterious and magical character is sometimes attached to the various "ages" comparable to the qualities associated with the alphabet and numbers, minerals and animals. A case in point is the Theory of the "Four Monarchies" of gold, silver, iron and brass which persisted into the modern period. Of course, we can see that these systems of chronology rested on false assumptions and strange parallels; yet out of this chaos of mistaken notions the idea or concept of *universal history*, centering about Rome as its source and nucleus, was preserved for later times. In 417-18, during the preparation of *The City of God*, Orosius, following the suggestion of St. Augustine, compiled a universal history from Latin

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sources, called the *Seven Books against the Pagans* (*adversum paganos*), in which history is reshaped and formulated anew to support the Augustinian position against pagan charges. He writes a profane history proving the abundance of calamities that had afflicted mankind before the time of Christ and introducing historical periods corresponding with the four monarchies, Babylonian, Macedonian, African, and Roman. Taylor calls this work "a red tale of carnage," told with "few palpable miracles." "The miracle lies in God's *ineffabilis ordinatio* of events, and especially in marvellous chronological parallels shown in the histories of nations, for our edification."¹ And these parallels were held evidence of the presence of God in human affairs and of God's providential guidance of the world. As Professor Haskins has pointed out: "This sixth age coincided with the Roman empire, the last of the four great monarchies of the vision of the prophet Daniel, so that the persistence of Rome was assured until the end of all things earthly."²

For the Middle Ages, however, we need only recall that scholastic philosophy is fundamentally teleological, that is, it is directed purposefully toward an end or goal. And during the Middle Ages, that goal and master-motive are man's salvation, and so we return to mediaeval symbolism and the major theme of "otherworldliness." The magical efficacy of Christ's sacrifice as embodied in the catholic sacraments is the bridge that spans the abyss, and over it passes the only highway, the road of salvation, which leads to the gates of the City of God in the other world. No mediaeval theologian discusses this crucial question more thoroughly than Hugh of St. Victor who lived in the first half of the twelfth century

¹H. O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind* (4th ed., New York: Macmillan, 1925), I, 82-84.

²C. H. Haskins, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

and wrote a mighty treatise *On the Sacraments*. In the *Mediaeval Mind*, Henry Osborn Taylor, speaking of Hugh, says: "The rational and unseen are a world as well as the material and visible. The sacramental quality of the material world lies in its correspondence to the unseen world,"¹ and again:

Symbolism and allegory are made part of the constitution of the world and of man; they connect man's body and environment with his spirit, and link the life of this world with the life to come. Hugh has thus grounded and established symbolism in the purposes of God, in the universal scheme of things, and in the nature and destinies of man.²

In these tremendous cathedrals of thought, these "architectonic *Summae*," building downward from God to His creation, history assumes its mediaeval perspective and becomes the sacramental narrative of God's saving grace working through the ways of men.

Looking backward now from the crystal light of the High Middle Ages to Thucydides shimmering in the golden haze, let me repeat some words of Rostovtzeff where he calls our attention to the fact that "Thucydides faced the problem of representing facts in their reality, and of stripping off the wrappings in which they were disguised, that he did this with extraordinary precision, following scientific rule and applying all those methods which we call historical criticism," and that it was his supreme object and ultimate purpose to explain facts upon a basis, not theological but rational and logical, and to indicate the necessary continuity of cause and effect between events.³ On the one hand, Thucydides establishing the necessary connection between human events based on the principle of historical continuity

¹ H. O. Taylor, *op. cit.*, II, 95.

² *Ibid.*, II, 101.

³ M. Rostovtzeff, *A History of the Ancient World* (2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1930), I, 304. This reference is condensed from the text.

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and causality; on the other, St. Augustine linking the life of this world with the life to come through the saving grace of God: there is no common denominator for they are incommensurable. It is difficult to choose between them. Sometimes I think I should rather dwell with Augustine in The City of God forever than live with Thucydides through the insane chaos of the quarter century of the Peloponnesian wars. Still it would be hard to give up the earlier years of Plato—we could not give him up entirely else we might not have Augustine—, to lose Sophocles and Euripides, and then to miss Aristophanes! Our reaction to the intangible things of the spirit is much governed by our tastes. And so I evade the issue in a fog of doubt. But I hope that no one will assume that I am accepting Augustine's philosophy of history; I am merely saying that the Peloponnesian wars were a bad time. Nevertheless, I fear for the future lest the "disintegrating critics" may yet have other bad dreams and see economists and politicians, sociologists and historians in the skies.

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